



# Rutland County Council

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Minutes of the **MEETING of the GROWTH, INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held via Zoom on Thursday, 22nd October, 2020 at 7.00 pm

**PRESENT:** Mrs J Fox (Chair)  
Mr N Begy  
Ms A MacCartney  
Mr M Oxley  
Mrs K Payne  
Mr I Razzell

<b>OFFICERS</b>	Mr S Della Rocca	Strategic Director for Resources
<b>PRESENT:</b>	Mr A Nix	Head of IT and Customer Services
	Mr R Ranson	Senior Planning Manager
	Mr J von der Voelsungen	Parking Manager
	Mrs J Morley	Governance Officer

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr O Hemsley Leader and Portfolio Holder for Rutland One Public Estate & Growth, Tourism & Economic Development, Property, Communications and Resources (other than finance)

Mr G Brown Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Finance

Mrs L Stephenson Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure, Environment, Highways, Transportation and Road Safety

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The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and announced that the running order of the agenda would change from that published. The Parking Strategy item would now be heard at item number seven, and the Biodiversity item moved to last on the agenda at item number 11.

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## **1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Jones.

## **2 RECORD OF MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 13 August 2020 were agreed as a true record.

### **3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS**

No petitions, deputations or questions had been received.

### **5 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS**

No questions with notice had been received from Members.

### **6 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS**

No notices of motion had been received from Members.

### **7 PARKING STRATEGY**

Report No.121/2020 was received from the Strategic Director for Places. Councillor Stephenson the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure, Environment, Highways, Transportation and Road Safety introduced the report, the purpose of which was to present the existing strategy for review and to invite comment on the shape of a future Parking Strategy and its content and consultation. Mr Von der Voelsungen, Parking Manager, responded to Members' questions.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- A refreshed strategy was due by 2021 and the Portfolio Holder wanted scrutiny to have input at the start of the process.
- Members were asked to look at the Strategy in strategic terms and general parking principles rather than referring to specific situations.
- The new strategy could consider and include villages rather than just focus on the two market towns, and move away from the current system of referral to the Highways and Transport Working Group (HTWG) to assess individual village schemes.
- Fees and Charges had been reviewed as part of the annual budget setting process.
- Any proposed changes to the strategy and new approaches needed to bear in mind the underpinning Department of Transport guidelines and any emerging legislation, as well as the limited resources available.
- It was suggested that consultation on the new strategy could be done via the Parish Forum.
- Councillor Begy felt that the new strategy should be reviewed more often as the old strategy had been in place for 10 years.
- The national 'Selfish Parking' campaign, which had been organised by the British Parking association and launched on 23 October, was focussed on tackling inconsiderate parking behaviour such as obstructing the pavement or if the lines and signs indicated no parking.

- Residents parking hours had been consulted on and residents had requested the hours of 8am-6pm even though many residents were out at work during this time. Releasing residents' spaces could provide additional parking in town however once residents' parking bays were established they were very difficult to reclaim.
- A park and ride experiment in Uppingham, using Uppingham Community College parking for a Christmas shopping event, had proved very successful.
- The 30 minutes free parking was popular with residents and Members hoped that this would continue.
- Although yellow lines in the villages would relieve 'pinch points' this could lead to an unwanted urbanisation of villages.
- As part of developing the new strategy there needed to be positive engagement with local businesses to find out how the Council could work in partnership with them.
- There were blocks of redundant garages that could be used for additional parking but as most of them were privately owned the Council was somewhat powerless to act.
- The new Strategy should consider HGV parking.
- Councillor Payne made a plea for officers to engage with parish councils over the strategy particularly those with neighbourhood planning groups who had already done much of the work on parking requirements and issues within the village.
- Most councils had a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Police but there was still some confusion over when the police would step in and enforce restrictions. Councillor Stephenson, the Portfolio Holder and Mr Von der Voelsungen, the Parking Manager, would address this issue with Inspector Danvers in order to firm up the MOU.
- Digital signage could be used to indicate where parking spaces were available within the town.
- The Chair was keen that a grass roots up consultation be undertaken that included the villages, especially those that surrounded Rutland Water.
- The intention was for a new parking strategy to be in place by summer 2021.

#### **ACTION:**

Councillor Stephenson agreed to give a verbal update on the progress of the new strategy at the Committee's February meeting.

## **8 PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE WHITE PAPER**

Report No.121/2020 was received from the Strategic Director of Places.

Councillor G Brown, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Planning, Property and Finance introduced the report the purpose of which was for Scrutiny to consider the Government's proposals as set out in the White Paper and to agree any comments for consideration by Cabinet at its meeting to take place on 27<sup>th</sup> October.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- Officers were congratulated for their work in preparing both the initial draft consultation response and the update following the contributions made by Members at the Council meeting on Monday 12 October.

- Members agreed that there was a distinct lack of detail and substance to the proposals contained within the White Paper.
- Councillor Brown, the Portfolio Holder for Planning, had joined a meeting with civil servants from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Neighbourhood Plan section where they had talked in more detail of what the changes to legislation and regulations might look like in particular;
  - Neighbourhood Plans (NP) being able to allocate sites
  - Whether NPs should have a role in defining codes within renewal areas and the role of NP Groups in the Local Plan process to find the best way to produce a common multi layered digital map for the area
  - Improvements to the NP process that could be made in line with the proposals for Local Plans
  - Support for NP Groups to embrace the opportunities of digital plan making and data.
- It was important that a technically strong and robust set of arguments was submitted not just on those parts of the Paper which the Council disliked but also those that it did, as it was made clear, following a meeting with the Rutland MP Alicia Kearns, that there was a lot of unrest in Parliament about the white paper and that the Government might take stock of the strength of feeling within the country.
- Alicia Kearns had met with Chris Pincher, the Minister for Housing and Robert Jenrick, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to fight on RCC's behalf on the key issues.
- The Unitary Councils Network had also submitted a response to Government on the white paper which RCC had been involved in and which strengthened the points put forward to Government.
- A Select Committee was being set up to look at the white paper and RCC would be providing a robust response to the 10 questions asked as Ministers would be challenged on the basis of the answers RCC provided.
- Councillor Razell commented on the 'shoddiness' of the White Paper which had resulted in officers having to spend an inordinate amount of time, far in excess of what they should have had to, responding to the paper. The comments back to Government should reflect this.
- There was no mention in the White Paper of traveller sites and this needed to be highlighted in the RCC response.
- Councillor Payne felt that the biggest issue with the paper was the lack of accountability and questioned whether this issue had come through strongly enough in the RCC response and cited paragraph 6.2 of the revised response as an example. The proposal that automatic outline planning permission would be granted for areas identified as Growth areas caused grave concerns as the Council would have very little opportunity to go into detail and consider the public interest.
- As the Paper stressed that Neighbourhood Plans would be very important going forward, Councillor Fox was concerned that many parish meetings did not have enough funding to draw up a Neighbourhood Plan and asked whether there would be any funding available if they joined together. In response, Councillor Brown confirmed that if Communities could get a group of 21 people or more together they could make a submission to the Local Authority to ask for funding. Sometimes however, if there was a common objective it was better for communities to join with a larger neighbouring parish council. Councillor Brown warned against extending this any wider, for example to take in a ward, as the amount of work increased exponentially in relation to the number of bodies you had involved in delivering a Neighbourhood Plan.

- Funding had been increased to £10,000 which was enough to support the production of a Neighbourhood Plan however it was important to get the right consultants who were knowledgeable in their field and provided value for money. Another funding option would be for parish meetings to raise their precepts.

## **9 MEMBERS' MYACCOUNT**

A verbal update on the Members MyAccount was received from Mr Della Rocca, Strategic Director for Resources.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- During an earlier pre-Covid MyAccount demonstration Members had raised the idea of a Members MyAccount area where they could direct service requests, log issues on behalf of residents, ask for information or see information that was pertinent for their ward.
- Members had previously been sent a list of service area contact numbers and in effect the Members MyAccount would replace this approach of contacting officers directly with queries.
- Mr Della Rocca asked Members whether they still thought a Members MyAccount was something that would be useful and also whether they thought all Members would be prepared to use the system for all of the issues it covered rather than in an ad hoc way and in addition to the existing processes. Full adoption of the system would mean much better analysis of the data it provided, for example, the most common types of issues, whether responses were given in a timely fashion and the themes in certain parts of the business.
- Councillor Oxley asked whether a feature could be built into the programme that notified fellow ward members in the same way that copying into an email did. This would avoid duplication into the system or the use of other routes.
- Councillor Payne wholeheartedly supported the concept and felt that being able to see and use the metrics would be very valuable especially being able to see the different demands on officers.
- If residents had a better understanding of the role of ward members and passed their queries directly through to them then the service had the potential to take pressure off the town councils.
- Councillor Begy asked officers to ensure that the system worked well on mobile phones.
- The extent of the system and what functions the Members MyAccount would include still needed to be defined. Members felt that a distinction should be made between logging issues on behalf of residents and ward work, and logging personal issues that Members had such as an IT problem or papers required from Governance.
- If only half of the Members used MyAccount then it would defeat the objective of introducing such a system.
- For Members who did not wish to log into the system there was a way to configure it to work using email.
- Mr Della Rocca would consider the best way of sounding out all Members' opinions on the MyAccount system.

## **10 ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2020-21**

The Committee discussed the Growth Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee work plan for the municipal year 2020-21.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- Councillor Begy had a long list of items that he would send to Members of the Committee to consider.
- Councillor Oxley passed on Councillor Jones' concerns that some of the items identified last year had fallen off the work schedule.
- The Growth Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee oversaw a considerable area and covered three Cabinet portfolios which meant that because of time restrictions and officer capacity not all issues could come to Committee.
- The Committee had a draft work plan and the Chair intended to hold a private meeting in November to drill down on the issues put forward so that they had specific targeted reports that came forward to committee.

### **ACTION:**

The Chair would set up a private meeting with Committee Members in November to agree items for the February meeting.

## **11 BIODIVERSITY TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

This item had been moved to last on the agenda as the Chair, of both the Committee and the Task and Finish Group, having talked further with the Portfolio Holders proposed to take a different approach before recommending to Council. Because of the Covid pandemic the report had been delayed and in the intervening period the original officers supporting the group had left the Council. The Chair therefore had written to members of the Task and Finish Group and proposed that she meet with the new Senior Environmental Services Manager to review and further evaluate the recommendations, looking in particular at the cost and resource requirements needed to implement them. The Task and Finish Group would then meet again before reporting back to the Committee.

## **12 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair had not been notified of any other urgent business.

## **13 DATE AND PREVIEW OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Growth, Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee would be held on Thursday, 28 January 2021.

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The Chair closed the meeting at 8.40pm

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